I: Good afternoon and thank you so much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to step by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I will need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols of the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you and you can leave it at any time. I would like to ask for your consent to record this conversation, as this would make it easier for me to analyze the data later. I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R3: Yes.

I: So this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the contents of the interview are anonymous and will be used only for my thesis. Do you have any questions before we start?

R3: No.

I: So my first question is how do you personally define sustainability?

R3: Sustainability, to me, is about using resources and products in a way that minimizes harm to the environment and supports long-term well-being. It involves considering the impacts of our actions on the planet and future generations. So I want to make sure that whatever actions I am taking are not doing extra damage to the environment and that I am taking care of my resources such as water or electricity.

I: So to what extent would you say that you're concerned about environmental issues, and are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R3: I'm very concerned about environmental issues, especially given the state of the world today. I think it's very important to be conscious of our impact on the environment and take actions to reduce it. In my daily routine, I try to incorporate sustainable practices such as recycling and being mindful of my energy and water consumption as I said. I have also started composting for my family, so I try to collect all the food scraps and we have a little composting bin in our backyard. We also try to carpool whenever possible. So my son has a lot of different extracurricular activities, so I try to coordinate with the other parents so that we can carpool since this is also more convenient for all of us. Also trying to buy locally whenever possible to support the local community. Because that is a part of sustainability as well right? Helping the community to sustain.

I: Great, and what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? What do you pay attention to, for example, colors, packaging materials, visuals, or anything else?

R3: So I usually consider a few factors. First, I try to opt for products with packaging materials that are more environmentally friendly, such as glass or cardboard. I always try to avoid plastic whenever I can. I also look for any labeling or certifications such as if something is organic. I try not to pay too much attention to aesthetics such as colors and all because I know that they are not always accurate. I am also very health conscious, so I prefer to look more at the nutrition label and the ingredients rather than the packaging.

I: Okay, what kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me examples of packaged goods that you may have bought recently, like at the grocery store or elsewhere?

R3: Recently, I purchased items like milk, bread, yogurt, sauces, and granola bars during my grocery shopping. Also vegetables and some meat like chicken and salmon.

I: Among the products you've just mentioned, did you notice if any of them were sustainable products?

R3: For items like granola bars, I try to choose ones with packaging that can be recycled, such as cardboard boxes. The pasta sauce as well comes in a glass jar so that can be recycled too. Hmm.. oh the salmon comes wrapped in a paper because I get it from the fish counter so that is also recyclable. Other than that, I don't think so.

I: How do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? What criteria would you use if you saw a product in a grocery store to determine if it was sustainable or not?

R3: When assessing the environmental sustainability of a product, I consider multiple factors. Firstly, I look at the packaging to see if it is recyclable or reusable. Sometimes packaging is also made from previously recycled material which is good. I also pay attention to the ingredients used in the product itself, ensuring they are environmentally friendly. For example, if I know that certain ingredients used in skincare or cleaning products are not good I try to avoid those. Mainly avoiding plastic or anything single-use for me is a big criteria.

I: Perfect. And my last question is, what elements of a product make you think that it is eco-friendlier than others, regardless of whether you buy it or not? So what elements of a product do you think you have certain conceptions of being eco-friendlier, regardless of whether you're going to purchase it.

R3: I know that companies, especially big companies, make big efforts to create a certain image for their products. So usually if there is something that is green or white then people think it is more sustainable because it looks more natural. Or even with images, like using flowers and trees and animals makes people think that it must be less processed but that is not true.

I: So I'm going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify them based on which you believe is the most and least sustainable, and I ask you to provide a brief explanation as to why you feel this way.

R3: Okay.

I: Can you see my screen?

R3: Yes.

I: Okay, so this is the first group, which is same brand and product in different packaging materials. So which one would you say is the most sustainable out of these three?

R3: I would choose the glass bottle on the left as the most sustainable option. Glass is recyclable, so I think that is the best one. The plastic bottle in the middle would end up in the trash, and the metal can on the right might not be as sustainable as the glass bottle but I'm not completely sure. Overall, I lean towards the glass bottle.

I: Great, and out of these three?

R3: Out of these, I would select the metal can in the middle as the most sustainable option. The entire can can be recycled, whereas with the glass bottle on the left, you may need to discard the cap. The plastic bottle on the right is the least sustainable choice because of the material of course. So the I think that the metal can appears to be the most sustainable among the three.

I: Good. What about these three?

R3: I would say the glass bottle on the right is the most sustainable choice. Both plastic bottles on the left and in the middle are not good, as they cannot be reused easily, especially the middle one. While I'm not entirely sure about the recyclability of the glass jar on the left, I consider the glass bottle on the right to be more sustainable.

I: Alright. So the next group is different brands with the same packaging material. Which one would you pick out of these three?

R3: I would choose the brand on the far left [Noosa] as the most sustainable option. I've purchased similar products before and have been able to reuse the packaging due to its proper top. The other two brands have lids that need to be discarded immediately, so that makes them less reusable.

I: Okay, what about these three?

R3: I'm not entirely sure, but perhaps the one on the right [Minute Maid] seems a bit cleaner in terms of packaging. They all look the exact same to me to be honest. They all have the same

colors and they show an orange so I think I would pick the healthiest option out of these, but I would have to look at the nutrition label to know that.

I: Alright. What about these ones?

R3: I would say the brand on the left [Land O'Lakes] is the most sustainable. It seems to have a cardboard-based packaging, which can be put into the recycling bin. The middle and right brands have their butter in, I think it is foil packaging, so that needs to be thrown away immediately.

I: Okay, what about these three?

R3: I would select the brand in the middle, Bonne Maman, as the most sustainable because it comes in a glass jar. Although the brand on the right (Welch's) is also in a glass container, I'm not sure about the brand on the left (Smuckers). But I actually always buy Bonne Maman jam and I know that it has very good ingredients and all, so that would be my personal choice.

I: Okay, and these three?

R3: I think, in terms of sustainability, they all seem the same to me because they are all in cardboard boxes. Maybe if I was just looking at the boxes, Triscuit looks the best because it has the wheat and the tomatoes, and it says 3 simple ingredients so I like that. The other two look a bit artificial to me, maybe because of the bright colors I'm not sure.

I: Great. What about these three?

R3: I think the one on the right [Seventh Generation] looks like the most sustainable. I think that it looks very clean even though all three products are actually all in plastic bottles so they are all equally bad. But Seventh Generation looks like it is better quality, since it has some actually statistics at the bottom so maybe it has better ingredients. I would have to check.

I: Perfect. And then we have the last group, which is different brands and different packaging materials. So same question, out of these three which ones would you choose?

R3: Among these, I would select the one on the left [On The Border] as the most sustainable. Once again, it is packaged in glass and can be reused after consumption. I like to save these jars for random storage so I know that I would definitely reuse this jar for something. Although the middle and right options might have some potential for reuse, plastic is not always the best choice for sustainability. I would prefer the glass.

I: Alright, and these ones?

R3: I think out of these options, Volleman's look like the best. Of course I have never seen it, it looks like a local brand we don't have, but I like that it comes in glass packaging. I have never

seen that in our grocery store. If we had that available I would pick that. It also looks like it is more natural and healthier because it says fresh from our farm, so maybe it is better quality.

I: Perfect, and I believe this is the last one.

R3: Yes, for this group, I would say the middle one [Rise] is the most sustainable since it is in a metal container. Every part of the metal container can be compacted and reused in the recycling process. With the other two options, you might have to dispose of the lid or the outer packaging in order to recycle them like that. The one on the left looks like plastic actually so not that one.

I: Okay, and I just have one last follow up question to end the interview. So did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands that we've reviewed today? In case you're not familiar with greenwashing, it's defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact. So did you think any of the brands today were purposefully designing their package in a certain way to create a certain perception that may not be true?

R3: Yeah definitely. As I said earlier, companies will use pictures and colors to make people think something is better. So this coffee one, the green packaging and the chameleon makes you think it is better even though those things have nothing to do with coffee at all. Or even the yogurts with the photos of the fruit and all. You don’t know what the product is actually like, but when you see that you immediately think it must be healthy.

I: Great, well that is the end of our interview. Thank you so much for your help!

R3: No problem let me know if you need anything else for this.